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DEPARTMENT FOR USUN/W AND IO/UNP; NSC FOR POWER

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TAGS: PREL KUNR UNGA UNSC GE JA BR IN

SUBJECT: UNSC REFORM: P-3 DISCUSS FRENCH-UK INTERMEDIATE OPTION

Classified By: Ambassador Susan E. Rice for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The UK and France formally raised with the United States their "intermediate option" initiative for Security Council expansion in an April 16 meeting of P-3 Perm Reps and IO Assistant Secretary-equivalents. Ambassador Rice emphasized the Administration's preference to articulate its broad principles on Security Council reform, its openness to an enlargement, and its decision not to favor one proposal over another at this time. The British and French delegations emphasized that they do not yet have a formal proposal to share. Ambassador Rice noted that while the intermediate option afforded adaptability in the long-term for an evolving international framework, the P-3 would have little leverage over the elections to choose the member states to occupy the seats. UK Perm Rep Sawers said that eventually a P-5 position on the issue would be needed as the African Group would only revisit the Ezulwini Consensus if there were momentum towards another proposal. While the UK and French delegations said they were hearing positive signals from the Russians and Chinese, USUN believes they are closer to our own position than that of the British and French. End summary.

UK and France seek U.S. views on intermediate option initiative

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¶2. (C) In an April 16 meeting of P-3 Perm Reps and IO Assistant Secretary-equivalents, the UK and France formally presented us their "intermediate option" which evolved from the Sarkozy-Brown summit a year ago. UK Perm Rep Sawers said that the UK and France have been supporters of Security Council enlargement greater than the U.S. has been historically ready to support. Sawers said a more modest expansion involving a third category of seats has a greater chance of success, given the lack of an overwhelming majority in favor of additional permanent members. While the UK and France do not have a formal proposal to share on the intermediate option, he hoped the new Administration would look at the initiative favorably.

U.S. prefers to articulate broad principles on reform

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¶3. (C) Ambassador Rice emphasized that the new Administration has preferred to articulate its broad principles of Security Council reform, including that: the

Council should reflect the current realities of the 21st century, any expansion should not impede the Council's efficiency and effectiveness, there should be no change to the veto structure, and additional permanent members need to be state-specific and chosen based upon their capacity to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. She underscored that the United States is open to an enlargement but does not plan to voice favor for one proposal over another at this time in the negotiating process. Both Ambassador Rice and Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs Esther Brimmer emphasized that the ratification process will be difficult and there may only be one opportunity for reform of the Council in the next 20 years.

¶4. (C) French Perm Rep Ripert commented that, while the P-3 may not consider the Council's legitimacy to be at stake, others are questioning it, creating a different climate than only a few years ago. IO A/S Brimmer stressed that the P-3 should be careful in how they frame Council reform questions so as to not imply a current lack of legitimacy. Sawers acknowledged that we want to be mindful of how we proceed since the Security Council is currently effective and our interests are protected. French Director of UN and International Relations Sylvia Berman, however, noted that with the ongoing reforms of the international financial infrastructure, a lack of progress on Council reform will be noted.

Few specifics on actual mechanics  
of intermediate option

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¶5. (C) When pressed on how the intermediate category of members would be chosen, neither the French nor the British offered clear answers. Ripert suggested that he thought Japan and Brazil would easily win election for intermediate seats but was not as positive about Germany beating out Italy or India defeating Pakistan, given the strength at the UN of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Ambassador Rice raised whether we would want Libya, for example, currently popular as an African Union leader, on the Council for five years in the intermediate category. She noted that the P-3 would have little leverage over these elections. Berman suggested that a reform proposal might be structured as a package so as not to require elections. (Comment: USUN believes it would be almost impossible to pursue an intermediate category without resorting to an electoral process, given the Uniting for Consensus bloc's constant chorus that elections are needed to ensure accountability. End comment.) All agreed that if the intermediate option was ultimately pursued, it could end up becoming permanent and not an interim step towards additional permanent seats, so all needed to be comfortable with its long-term consequences.

¶6. (C) UK Head of International Institutions Directorate Anwar Choudhury asked Ambassador Rice if the U.S. has a preference -- additional permanent seats or the intermediate option. Ambassador Rice responded that we remain open-minded about an enlargement but had thought of it as a one-off update for the 21st century. She noted that an attractive feature of the intermediate option is that it does allow for the adaptation of the evolving international framework. For example, if an African state grows in prominence in 20 years, it might then have a better claim on a longer-term seat than would South Africa in 20 years. She suggested that a more permanent solution with equal flexibility could be more attractive.

¶7. (C) Berman said that it would be helpful to have overall U.S. support for the process, but not necessarily for a precise solution. Ripert suggested that Ambassador Rice again voice U.S. openness for the idea of an enlargement. Ambassador Rice replied that she did convey U.S. openness in her February 19 statement and U.S. statements since then have

reiterated the same theme and have conveyed our parameters for reform but she could certainly re-emphasize the point in the next round of intergovernmental negotiations. Sawers noted that the UK and France would like to continue to share their thoughts privately with the U.S. on the intermediate option, as they are developed. Ambassador Rice agreed but stressed that we do not want to weigh in publicly on their proposal at this time.

UK/French seek eventual P-5 position  
on proposal to move African Group

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¶ 18. (C) Sawers said that eventually it would be useful to have a "P-5 sentiment" on the proposal. He said that the Africans will only deviate away from the Ezulwini Consensus if they see "there is momentum toward something else," but noted that we should not press them until there was broader sentiment in favor of a specific proposal. Sawers and Ripert both noted that their capitals are hearing positive signals from the Russians and Chinese about the intermediate option. Sawers said he believes Russian Perm Rep Churkin's tone has moderated significantly in the last six months. Choudhury commented, "Their positions have evolved." Ripert said that Beijing had called in the French Embassy at the start of intergovernmental negotiations to emphasize its support.

¶ 19. (C) Comment: USUN does not share the French and British assessment of the Russian and Chinese positions. While the Russians and Chinese may be willing to discuss the intermediate option and are closely following intergovernmental negotiations, we do not think they are ready to stand side-by-side with France and the UK and press for the intermediate options as the optimal solution. The Russian and Chinese positions are closer to our own (i.e., let the membership take the lead for the time being), than that of the French and British. End comment.

Rice